DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 316 316 PS 018 596

TITLE New Hampshire Kindergarten Handbook: A Guide to the Development of Local Kindergarten Programs.

INSTITUTION New Hampshire Association for the Education of Young Children, Concord.; New Hampshire State Dept. of Education, Concord.

PUB DATE Sep 87

NOTE 38p.; Pages 29 and 31 contain light type.

PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Citizen Role; *Committees; Educational Development; *Educational Legislation; Educational Planning; *Financial Support; Guidelines; *Kindergarten; Outcomes of Education; Primary Education; *Program Development; *Program Implementation; Teacher Role

IDENTIFIERS *New Hampshire; Study Groups

ABSTRACT

Organized as both a reference document and a how-to-do-it manual, this handbook was prepared to answer frequently asked questions about the value of kindergarten and to assist those interested in securing support to address local needs and to implement kindergarten programs in New Hampshire. Chapter 1 provides a discussion of the rationale for supporting kindergarten. It includes a brief summary of research about early educational experiences and the value of kindergarten, along with answers to questions commonly raised in local communities when the value of kindergarten is debated. Chapter 2 describes the sequence of events involved in initiating a kindergarten, including the role of kindergarten study committees. Chapter 3 offers a working guide to use in undertaking the tasks associated with planning, gaining support for, and designing a kindergarten. Chapter 4 examines the problem of gaining funds for kindergarten, including the steps required in seeking fiscal support from a local school district or town. In Chapter 5, a discussion is presented for those seeking a base of support for kindergartens at the state level. Included is information about the status of kindergartens in New Hampshire and the nation. Chapter 6 explains the design of high quality programs by presenting descriptions of important elements in the operation of a kindergarten program. (RH)

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New Hampshire Kindergarten Handbook

A Guide to the Development of Local Kindergarten Programs

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New Hampshire Association for the Education of Young Children

September 1987

PS 018596

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PREFACE TO THE 1983 EDITION

This handbook is the culmination of a series of activities which began in 1980. As a result of a survey of NHAEYC members, the Public Policy Committee chose as its long-term focus for 1980-81 the development of universal public kindergartens in New Hampshire. Members of the committee developed a series of action steps. Later, the following action steps were endorsed by the membership.

1. A subcommittee of the NHAEYC Public Policy Committee should develop a Kindergarten Handbook to be made available to local NHAEYC members and others seeking to develop kindergartens in their communities.

2. NHAEYC should develop a group of five to ten individuals willing to provide free consultation and technical assistance to community groups seeking to develop public kindergartens.

3. NHAEYC should encourage regional meetings to provide forums for the discussion of the relationship between private and public kindergartens, with a focus on the role of private kindergartens as on-going alternatives in all communities.

The original Kindergarten Handbook Committee first met in the Spring of 1980 under the leadership of Bruce Mallory. His dedication to the task was inspiring. Members of that committee included Jane Abbott Sweatt, Nancy Andrews, Cherri Brewer, Jennie Hodgson, Dotty McCarthy, Helen Morrison, Cynthia Mowles, Ann Onion, Diane Robinson, Susan Rowe, Mary Starvish, and Ruth Zax. During 1980-81, that committee developed draft materials for a kindergarten resource manual and then applied in February, 1982 for a Membership Action Group Grant to expand the materials into a formal handbook that would be printed and widely distributed in New Hampshire.

The current committee has worked during the past year to carry out the objectives of that grant by revising and expanding the original materials. We have been assisted in our efforts by a team of document reviewers: Bruce Mallory, Cynthia Mowles, Elizabeth Hewlett, and Ruth Zax. We also received special assistance from Barbara Crosby and Douglas Brown of the New Hampshire State Department of Education.

Readers who are interested in action steps two and three (consultation and regional meetings) should contact the New Hampshire State Department of Education. These services are provided by the Consultant in Primary Education/Reading (telephone 271-2632).

We hope these efforts by all of us will encourage the continued action of many others to initiate and support quality programs for the education of young children.

Susan G. Rowe, Chairperson
Charyl C. Brewer
M. Christine Dwyer
Jeffrey Kent

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

As of January 1986, the original stock of handbooks was exhausted. Such a publication is still needed in New Hampshire. Therefore, the New Hampshire Association for the Education of Young Children (NHAEYC) and the State Department of Education decided to update and reprint the original handbook. NHAEYC has given permission to update the information in the handbook and has financed its reprinting. The New Hampshire Department of Education has assisted in reprinting the handbook and in making it available to communities and school districts considering public kindergarten. This has been done with the help of the chair of the 1982-83 committee, Susan G. Rowe.

Fourteen more school districts in New Hampshire operate public kindergartens (71 districts in the 1986-87 school year) than when this handbook was originally printed in 1983. No doubt this publication, the NHAEYC New Hampshire Kindergarten Handbook, has helped. After this increase, 46% of New Hampshire school districts offer public kindergarten. All of the other states in the nation offer public kindergarten to virtually 100% of their five-year-olds or have a deadline to do so within the 1980's.

After a lapse of approximately two years, the New Hampshire Department of Education again has a consultant with a focus on early childhood education (Primary Education). One of the responsibilities of this position is to aid community groups which seek to develop public kindergartens. Our aim is public kindergartens with high quality programs available to 100% of the five-year-olds in New Hampshire.

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INTRODUCTION

KINDERGARTEN:

- stimulates children to use their minds and bodies;
- helps children feel confident and able to work with people and materials;
- helps children understand and live intelligently in their world;
- facilitates steady growth by providing the guidance, space, freedom, services, and equipment needed;
- helps children find a comfortable, contributing place in their group;
- teaches children to manage themselves, their materials, and the routines of the day, as well as take initiative in planning and doing things;
- helps children develop the skills and attitudes necessary for success in school; and
- extends the valuable efforts of parents to educate their children during the early years.

If you are fortunate enough to live in a community that supports public kindergarten, you probably already recognize the attributes listed above as characteristics of an excellent program. If you have first-hand experience with kindergartens, you also know how critical early educational experiences are in the lives of children.

But, on the other hand, if your community does not yet support public kindergarten or you are not sure that it should, you have selected the right resource. This handbook is for you! It was prepared to answer frequently asked questions about the value of kindergarten and to assist those interested in securing support to address local needs and to implement kindergarten programs. The handbook originated with the Association for the Education of Young Children affiliate in New Hampshire. Development of the handbook was supported by a Membership Action Group Grant from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The handbook is intended as a resource manual for local kindergarten study committees and as a guide for their activities. Thus, it is organized as both a reference document and a how-to-do-it manual. Those seeking more detailed information about children's development or specific ideas to use in kindergarten programs should contact the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1-800-424-2460).

This handbook includes six chapters. In Chapter 1, you will find a discussion of the rationale for supporting kindergartens. It includes a brief summary of research about early educational experiences and the value of kindergarten along with answers to questions commonly raised in local communities when the value of kindergarten is debated.

Chapter 2 describes the sequence of events involved in initiating a kindergarten, including the role of kindergarten study committees. Chapter 3 is a working guide to use in undertaking the tasks associated with planning, gaining support for, and designing a kindergarten. Chapter 4 tackles the problem of gaining funds for kindergarten, including the steps required in seeking fiscal support from a local school district or town.

In Chapter 5, a discussion is presented for those seeking a base of support for kindergartens at the state level. Included is information about the status of kindergartens in New Hampshire and the nation. Chapter 6 explains the design of high quality programs by presenting descriptions of important elements in the operation of a kindergarten program.

CHAPTER 1
RATIONALE: WHY KINDERGARTENS ARE NECESSARY

The arguments in favor of kindergarten are numerous. This section of the handbook highlights several different types of evidence which support the value of kindergarten. Perhaps the clearest evidence in favor of kindergartens is their growth and persistence, over the last one hundred years, as an important part of the American educational system. For example, by 1982 over 80% of the five-year-old population in the United States was enrolled in public kindergartens--although not required to do so. This is an indication of the overwhelming parental and community support enjoyed by kindergartens where they have been established.

The strength of that support is grounded in the benefits of kindergarten perceived by parents for themselves and their children. For the child, kindergarten provides opportunities to play and socialize with other children; to meet and work with a variety of adults; and to practice newly developing skills in the areas of speaking, listening, problem-solving, cooperating, making decisions, taking responsibility, taking care of personal needs, using muscles, and creating practical and artistic projects. Children with unique and special needs benefit by early identification because programs to maximize learning potential can begin earlier. In short, kindergarten is an opportunity for the young child to acquire many of the skills that are needed for success in later years.

For the family, kindergarten helps to ease the transition from home to school. It can be a middle-ground between the intimacy and personal attention provided by the family in the first years of life and the more structured, group setting of the elementary school. The link between home and school can be initiated and strengthened during the kindergarten year, and parents can have a chance to keep close contact with the kindergarten teacher in order to understand how their children are developing.

The larger society benefits from a kindergarten program in several ways. First, children with a kindergarten experience come to first grade ready to participate in the public school. Kindergarten participants can better meet school expectations in curriculum such as reading, writing, problem solving, and cooperation. Second, children who have been to kindergarten are much less likely to repeat one or more elementary grades. Third, children with education before the age of six are less likely to require special education services during the rest of elementary school. Finally, children who have been to a good preschool or kindergarten are less likely to drop out of high school before graduation. All of these benefits may reduce school expenses by diminishing the need for later remedial services.

The existence of private kindergartens in many communities is an indication of the support among parents for early school experiences. A public program extends that valued opportunity to all children regardless of parents' financial ability.

In the past, the long-range benefits of the kindergarten experience were assumed but not proven. Several recent studies provide concrete evidence of kindergarten's social and academic advantages to children and its economic advantage to school systems and communities.

In 1980, the Tennessee Department of Education examined the school experiences of that state's eighth grade students. On the state's minimum proficiency tests, those students who had attended kindergarten scored significantly better in all test areas (reading, language, mathematics, and spelling) as compared to those who had not attended kindergarten. Further, students who had attended kindergarten were much less likely to have repeated one or more grades during elementary school--a 17% retention rate compared to 30% for those without kindergarten experience. For the State of Tennessee, the additional cost of education due only to this higher retention rate was estimated at $2.5 million annually.

Most evidence supporting the positive long-range effects of the preschool/kindergarten experience is contained in longitudinal studies of low-income disadvantaged children. One of the best known and most comprehensive of these studies was conducted by the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies at Cornell University. The Lasting Effects After Preschool reported the following findings about the benefits of early school experience.

- Early education programs significantly reduced the number of children assigned to special education classes during their school careers--regardless of their initial abilities or early home backgrounds.

- Early education programs significantly reduced the number of children retained in grade.

- Early education significantly increased children's mathematics achievement by the fourth grade and produced a trend of improvement in reading scores as well.

- IQ test scores were higher for children who attended early education programs for up to three years after the programs ended (i.e., at grade three).

The above evidence about the value of kindergarten can be useful when describing the benefits to those who do not have first-hand experience with early education programs. The next section presents arguments in favor of public kindergarten in a somewhat different form--as answers to questions frequently asked by community members considering public support for a kindergarten program. In some cases, the following explanations about the value of kindergarten have been amplified by quotes from James Hymes, a highly respected expert on early education.

A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER ASKS: "WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE? . . . I DIDN'T HAVE KINDERGARTEN AND I'M OK."

While it is not possible to guarantee the specific advantages that kindergarten will have for any individual child, it is important to examine the evidence about the effects that early school experience has already had on large groups of children. The payoff has been in terms of higher achievement in basic skills, fewer retentions, and reduced need for special education services.

> Yet there is harm if good schools do not exist for fours and fives. The greatest harm, like the greatest value, is out in the open for anyone to see. And it is almost universal. What is this harm? Without the pre-primary education fours and fives are idle. They are unemployed.
>
> Without good schools fours and fives are isolated from the world of their friends. They are isolated from ideas that could make sense to them. They . . . bang around on the fringe of a busy adult world of stores and streets and homes not geared to them.
> (James Hymes)

A MOTHER ASKS: "WHAT CAN CHILDREN REALLY DO IN ONLY TWO HOURS A DAY?"

Kindergarten represents an entirely new set of experiences for many children, one for which they must learn a new set of behaviors. As with any new experience, the child's new relationship with school takes time to develop and is best done in a situation in which the emphasis is on quality of the experiences rather than the quantity of time. However, it is important to realize that for many children kindergarten is only part of their busy day. Some districts have recognized the value of extended-day sessions. Many children also attend day care programs.

A FATHER ASKS: "AREN'T CHILDREN REALLY BETTER OFF AT HOME?"

Kindergarten programs by virtue of their abbreviated-day format recognize the benefits for the young child of time at home with the immediate family. Most

five-year-olds are ready and eager to encounter the wider world and to seek new relationships with children and adults outside the immediate family. The kindergarten program and format is organized to allow the easy transition between home and school, by actually encouraging the child to spend the majority of his/her day at home yet beginning to introduce the new experience of school. Don't forget that children who are enrolled in day care also benefit by a transition between their experiences and formal schooling.

> You can say why good schools for this age are so important in four words: The children are ready. You can say it in three words: They are popping. They are bursting. They are eager. They have reached a new time in their lives, a time when stimulation, adventure, ideas, challenge, companionship have begun to be of prime importance. The children come eagerly. They love their parents. They love their homes. But with the fullness of their whole bodies they seek friends their own age, activity, experience. (James Hymes)

A COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKS: "WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KINDERGARTEN AND READINESS? WHICH SHOULD WE HAVE?"

Although the actual descriptions of kindergarten and readiness or pre-first grade programs vary by school district, the following generalizations are true in most cases. Kindergarten is designed for children of all abilities and developmental stages; readiness is usually reserved for six-year-olds who are not considered sufficiently mature or skillful to be placed with their chronogical age-peers. Thus, kindergarten classes are more "heterogeneous" than readiness classes. Kindergartens are usually half-day programs; readiness programs are usually the same length as the regular school day. In general, kindergarten is designed as a transition between home and school; readiness is usually more oriented toward preparation for first grade, as a transition between informal learning and formal schooling. Many communities with kindergartens also have a readiness class for a smaller number of children. A few communities have chosen to begin readiness classes before implementing public kindergartens. The choice of one or the other or both largely depends on the community's philosophy and educational priorities.

A BUSINESS OWNER ASKS: "WE HAVE PRIVATE KINDERGARTENS. WON'T THEY BE FORCED TO CLOSE IF WE SUPPORT PUBLIC KINDERGARTEN?"

In most cases, private kindergarten providers have supported the growth of public kindergartens. They have either continued to offer kindergarten as an extension to the public school's half-day program, offered a different type of kindergarten program, or expanded their programs to include younger children. All of these choices result in increased child care and educational options for the community.

A BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKS: "HOW SHOULD WE FIGURE THE COST OF KINDERGARTEN?"

In thinking about the costs of kindergarten, consider the costs of personnel, equipment and materials, space, and transportation, if appropriate. Costs will vary according to the local area--the salaries paid to teachers, the type of program planned, and the number of children who will be enrolled. Usually, the per-pupil cost will not exceed one-half of the pupil cost for elementary students. Also, remember to consider the savings to the system which will accrue in the long run from lowered costs for retentions and potential lower costs for special education placements. If the kindergarten is the appropriate placement for special education students who otherwise would have been placed out-of-district, consider those savings as well in relation to the total costs.

CHAPTER 2
ROLE OF THE KINDERGARTEN STUDY COMMITTEE

One of the first steps in considering kindergarten is the establishment of a local study committee. It is the job of this committee to sift through available information with an eye to preparing answers to the public's questions. The purpose of the study committee is to prepare a sound rationale for kindergarten, encompassing as many viewpoints as possible and researching all of the ingredients that are required to make public kindergarten a reality in a particular community.

First, it is important to locate a broad spectrum of community members who are interested in exploring the establishment of a public kindergarten. Let us assume that you, the initiator of the idea, have two or three friends who share your commitment. You have met, discussed the topic, and are now ready to carry a proposal to the school board. Not yet! Step back and survey what you wish to accomplish. It is unlikely that only two or three people will be able to initiate all of the activities necessary to achieve support for kindergarten. By including more community members in the initial planning process, you are widening the base of support and increasing the ultimate effectiveness of your effort. You will also be lessening the workload on each individual as more people join you. Remember that this is a volunteer effort; members will have many demands on their time and energy.

The make-up of the committee is important to achieving the goal of public kindergarten. Consider including parents, first grade teachers, elementary principals, school board member(s), proprietors of private pre-school or kindergarten programs and other active or visible community members such as clergy, medical personnel, tradespeople, retirees, and the like. If your community, like many in New Hampshire, is made up of both long-term and new residents, include representatives from both groups to strengthen your cause.

The following sample agenda and time line may be helpful to you in planning a kindergarten campaign. Ideally, you should allow 18 months for the process from establishing your committee to implementing the kindergarten program. The number of months indicated for each stage in the chart below is only minimal; tasks are likely to require additional time.

I. Establish committee

(2 mos.)	A.	Contact friends and community members
Aug.-Sept.	B.	Inform school superintendent's office of your intentions
	C.	Inform newspaper of committee's purpose
	D.	Contact relevant organizations, local and state
	E.	Set committee goals, assign tasks, and develop time line

II. Conduct research

(2 mos.) A. Review available local and state resources
Oct.-Nov. B. Develop plans for new program
C. Determine benefits
D. Determine costs
E. Prepare written and oral presentations
F. Schedule presentations and press releases

III. Present findings to community

(4 mos.) A. Local organizations
Dec.-Mar. B. School board
C. School district meetings

The committee should make contact with the school superintendent's office at the onset of its work. Explain what you are hoping to accomplish, ask for information on past and current kindergarten efforts, and solicit the names of other interested individuals who could be contacted. You may want to request permission to post notices in schools and send announcements home with school-age children. In starting here you are alerting the system to your efforts at the beginning and asking for its assistance. At the very least, it is a gesture of good will on your part.

You may also consider asking the school board to appoint your committee to conduct a kindergarten study. However, this step is not necessary and may in fact be a problem if the school board does not support your actions. The committee should contact the New Hampshire Department of Education. The primary education and elementary consultants are the best resource for support and assistance. The State Department of Education has information that will help you in preparing a rationale as well as names of contact persons, research data, and program models.

Preparing press releases about your meetings and activities is important. Short releases submitted to local newspapers are best. Having a public meeting to find out if there are other people in the community interested enough to help is a good way to start your committee's work. The agenda for such a meeting should be included in your press release. Your agenda might include your reasons for wanting public kindergarten and an outline of the goals and activities planned by the committee.

Let's suppose that you have formed your committee, gone public with your purpose, and have had a public meeting to obtain more support. The next step is to contact local organizations to ask for help. Some groups choose to work on special projects for a certain amount of time and may be interested in this as a project. For example, the Parent-Teacher Organization, Junior Women's Clubs, Extension groups, and women's organizations have been helpful in many New Hampshire communities. You will also want to send speakers to these groups when you are ready to present the committee's recommendations at a

later date. There may also be members of the New Hampshire affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children who could assist you. Child care providers in your community may also be interested in assisting. Church groups, men's clubs (e.g., Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary), and recreation commissions are good bets for support too.

Now begins the difficult task of conducting research. One or more members should look at what is currently available in the community for five-year-old children. Another should determine if there are any current plans for new programs for five-year-olds, either public or private. A third should look into current literature on public kindergartens — rationale, effects, and possible programs. A fourth should calculate the costs to the local school district, including the identification of any resources available to help keep costs down, such as unused classroom space. A fifth member should ascertain your school district's funding process, including how and where a kindergarten proposal must be voted upon (see Chapter 4). If you have a large committee, you may wish to form sub-committees to study each area. Regular meetings should be held during the information gathering phase to keep everyone involved.

At the end of the research period, it will be time to set some short- and long-range goals. That is, the committee will need to set goals and a time line that the school board may undertake to implement the kindergarten program. You will need to be prepared to give recommendations to the townspeople regarding the implementation of public kindergarten.

When the local kindergarten study committee has reached this point, outlines for written and oral presentations should be developed. A list of speakers, particularly committee members, should be prepared and a schedule of presentation dates arranged with the organizations approached at the beginning of your work. Presentations should be planned with as many groups in town as possible. Again, press releases and news coverage are essential. This is the time to spread the word in preparation for the official vote.

The local school board will have been kept up to date by its representative to your committee. The Board deserves to hear your final recommendations at one of its regular meetings prior to the school district meeting.

The final test will come at the school district meeting. This is when the townspeople will vote on the kindergarten proposal. Be prepared to answer more questions at the meeting. You may also want to prepare a short (one page) leaflet with key facts about kindergarten, such as benefits and costs. If you have covered all the bases beforehand, it should make things easier at this time. But no one really knows until the votes are counted.

The ultimate goal of any local kindergarten study committee should be to present workable alternatives to the townspeople after looking at the entire spectrum of preschool education. Your committee's efforts will have made the local community knowledgeable about and sensitive to the needs of their preschool children. It is possible that your campaign may not succeed the first time. With continued work by the local kindergarten committee, the next time may be the right time for implementing public kindergarten in your community. Information is power--and your efforts will have increased the available information about education for young children, regardless of the outcome.

CHAPTER 3
PLANNING STRATEGIES: KEEPING THE COMMITTEE ON TRACK

This chapter includes a planning process that can be used to keep the study committee on track and to ensure that committee work is completed in an organized and timely fashion. First, the key tasks to be accomplished by the study committee must be identified. While different groups may state tasks differently and place varying emphasis on their importance, the following list will probably be common to most study committees.

KEY TASKS

1. Establish committee.

2. Identify population--local needs assessment.
   A. Number of children by age groups (2-, 3-, 4-year-olds).
   B. Number of 5-year-olds receiving services for special needs, including in-and out-of-district placements.

3. Determine currently available resources, including available space for identified population.

4. Collect research about possible kindergarten programs.

5. Determine type of program most appropriate to meet community's needs: all-day/half-day; five-day/part-week; year-long/semester/summer.

6. Determine start-up costs (equipment, supplies, renovations).

7. Determine operating costs, including instructional staff, supplies, transportation, clinical, and administrative.

8. Develop a time line for establishment of program.

9. Build a local broad-based coalition for support--persons with pre-school children; those with political power in the community; persons operating private pre-schools; school board members, administrators, teachers, PTA members; representatives of local human service agencies.

10. Prepare and offer public presentations about the kindergarten proposal.

Use the key tasks listed on the previous page (or an alternate set) to guide the work of the study committee. Use the following steps and the planning matrix (sample and blank forms found on pages 14 and 15) to organize your activities.

1. Review the key tasks; identify additional tasks if appropriate. Write tasks in first column of planning matrix.

2. Make copies of planning matrix for each committee member.

3. In column marked "current status", indicate committee's status in regard to each key task at time of initial planning meeting.

4. Determine target dates for completion of key tasks and enter in last column on the right.

5. Develop a time frame for monitoring programs.

6. For each key task develop benchmarks (progress checks).

7. Assign tasks to individuals and/or sub-committees.

8. Schedule regular committee meetings to monitor progress.

The first page of a planning matrix developed by a kindergarten planning committee is shown on page 14. At the time of their initial planning meeting on September 1, 198_, committee members determined their status relative to each task; divided tasks among committee members; and developed target dates for completion of tasks. They then planned backwards from the target dates to develop benchmarks to help them monitor their progress. Sub-committees planned periodic reports to the full committee to share information and plan next steps. The chair's role was to keep the planning process on schedule.

SAMPLE
PLANNING MATRIX FOR ESTABLISHING A KINDERGARTEN
PURPOSE To establish a public kindergarten

KEY TASKS	CURRENT STATUS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	TIME FRAME AND BENCHMARKS			TARGET DATE
I. Identify population--local needs assessment.	Yearly census by local Women's Club available through superintendent's office.		Sept. 30	Oct. 15	Nov. 30	
A. # of children aged 5, 4, & 3 (for future classes).		Sue Smith	Information obtained from superintendent's office.	Copies of census to sub-comm. chairs.	Present report to entire committee.	Nov. 30
B. # of 5-year-olds receiving services for special needs.	Figures available through school district's Director of Special Ed.		Sept. 30	Oct. 30	Nov. 30	
1. In-district 2. Out-of-district		Sue Smith	Contact Dir. of Special Ed.	Information obtained.	Information presented in report to entire committee.	Nov. 30
II. Determine available resources. Determine available space based on identified population.	In addition to population figures above, information available at the town hall. State Dept. of Ed. contact person is H. Schotanus.		Oct. 15	Nov. 15	Nov. 30	
		John Doe	Copies of: census report, zoning ordinances, and state requirements obtained.	Potential sites identified.	Report to full comm.- needs based on population & state and local requirements/ listing of potential locations for discussion.	Nov. 30

PLANNING MATRIX FOR ESTABLISHING A KINDERGARTEN

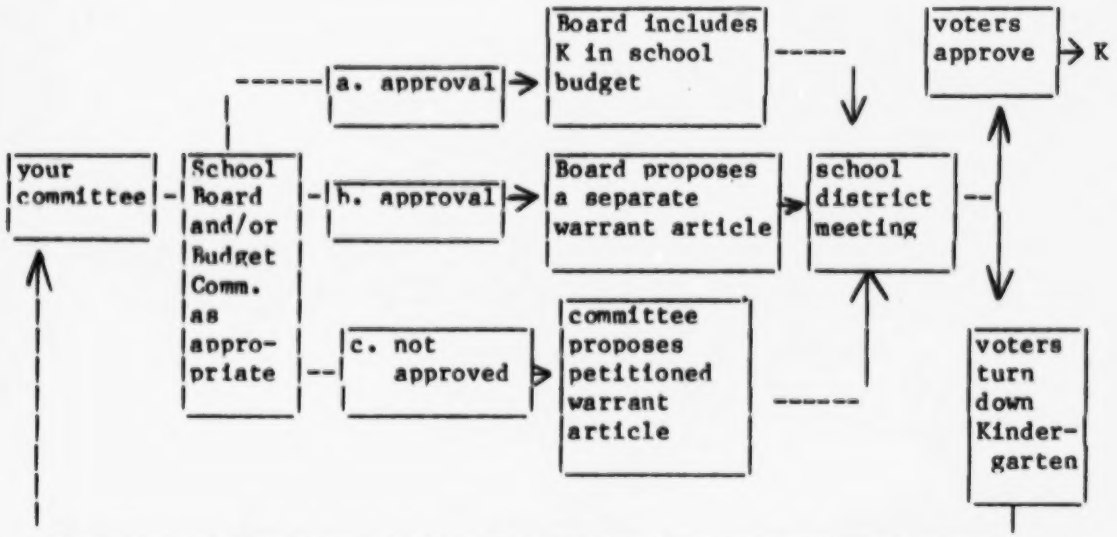
PURPOSE _____

KEY TASKS	CURRENT STATUS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	TIME FRAME AND BENCHMARKS			TARGET DATE

CHAPTER 4
SEEKING FISCAL SUPPORT

An important element of your planning process is to become familiar with your community or school district's funding process. Charted below are three possible means of getting public funds for kindergarten. Ask some questions so that you can determine which process is in place in your school district.

PROCESS I: Most communities in New Hampshire hold public school district meetings. Voters gather to express opinions and vote on the school budget as presented by the board or amended at the meeting. The following diagram demonstrates the steps involved in this process.

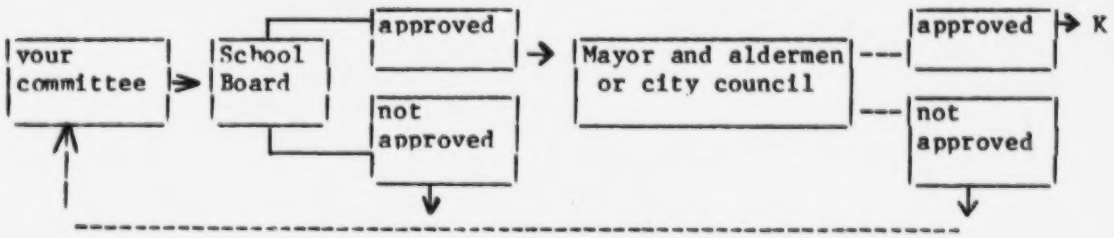


The concept of publicly supported kindergarten has originated among members of your committee. After suitable preparation, you take your proposal to the School Board and/or Budget Committee, as appropriate. (If your school district is controlled by the Municipal Budget Law (RSA 32), your School Board will share budget preparation with a Budget Committee.) Your proposal may be acted upon in one of three ways. It may be (a) approved and included in the school district budget; (b) approved and proposed as a separate warrant article to be voted on by citizens at the school district meeting; or (c) not approved. Your committee can choose to initiate a petitioned warrant article for action at the school district meeting even without School Board or Budget

Committee support. For this you must phone your Superintendent of Schools to learn (1) the number of signatures required for submission of a petitioned warrant article; and (2) the deadline for submission of such warrant articles.*

No matter which path leads you to the school district meeting, be prepared. Do not underestimate the importance of getting your supporters to attend this meeting. Don't assume that it is a good cause and therefore will be adopted. People attend school meetings to insure that their tax dollars are well spent. You must be prepared to present and defend your proposal. Know ahead of time who will speak out in opposition to public kindergarten. Be prepared to counter their opposition. Identify individuals who will speak in favor of public kindergarten and help them prepare brief statements of support.

PROCESS II: Many cities in New Hampshire use a different process. Here, elected officials make the final decision. The diagram below outlines this process.



Again, the process starts with your committee which must make a proposal to the school board. If your budget request is not approved at the school board level, you must regroup for another year. If approved, however, the school board's recommendation is forwarded to the next decision-making body. In some cases this is the mayor and aldermen; in others, it is the city council. If approved, you have met your goals; if not approved, you must again regroup for another year. Remember, each of these bodies is composed of individuals elected to represent constituents. See that candidates address the kindergarten issue in their next campaign for public office. If necessary, urge supporters of public kindergarten to run for office.

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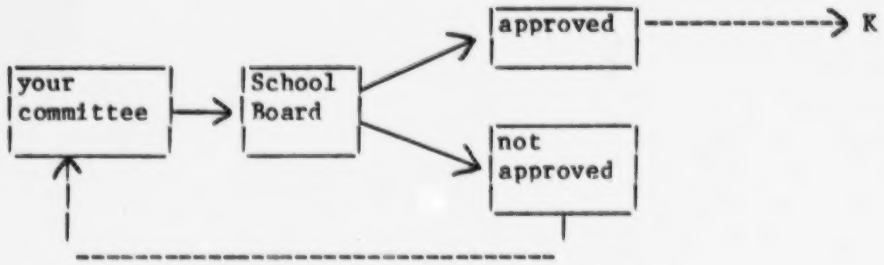
* In September 1986, RSA 197:6 provided that: "Upon the written application of 10 or more voters or 1/6 of the voters of the school district, presented to the school board or one of them not later than 30 days before the date prescribed for the school district meeting, the school board shall insert in the school district warrant for such meeting any subject-matter specified in such application. No article may be inserted after posting of said warrant. The right to have an article inserted in the warrant conferred by this section shall not be invalidated by the provisions of RSA 32."

PROCESS III: At present only one community in New Hampshire has an autonomous school board. This New Hampshire community already offers its children public kindergarten. The following diagram shows that a program proposal is simply accepted or rejected at the school board level. It is not forwarded to a second governmental body. While not common in New Hampshire, this model is prevalent in other states.



PROCESS I:

Claremont
Keene
Lebanon
ALL TOWNS AND COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

PROCESS II:

Berlin
Dover
Franklin
Laconia
Manchester
Nashua
Portsmouth
Rochester
Somersworth

PROCESS III:

Concord

CHAPTER 5
LEGISLATION AND KINDERGARTENS

Newcomers to New Hampshire are often surprised to learn that a majority of school districts do not make public kindergartens available to their children.

RSA 189:25 provides that "any elementary school may include a kindergarten program which, if it is provided, shall precede the other elementary grades." Therefore, the decision of whether or not to provide a public kindergarten is left to local option. Furthermore, a 1984 constitutional amendment requires the state to fund any new mandated programs. Therefore, it is unlikely that the legislature will, in the near future, pass a law mandating public kindergartens. New Hampshire is not unique in leaving the provision of public kindergarten programs up to local districts. For example, as of August 1986, over 90% of the school districts in Montana offered public kindergartens, all by local option.

Even long-time New Hampshire residents may not be aware of recent statewide efforts to encourage support for public kindergartens. Each of these efforts has represented an attempt to provide incentives for kindergarten implementation rather than mandate statewide programs. For example, two bills were introduced in the New Hampshire House of Representatives in 1983. The first (House Bill No. 258-FN) encouraged the establishment of kindergartens in public school:

> "This bill encourages school districts to establish kindergarten programs by giving the district $500 for each pupil in the kindergarten during its first year of operation. The State Board of Education is authorized to adopt rules relative to applying for the grant, standards of the kindergarten program, and requiring that school districts which do not maintain the kindergarten program for a certain period of time be required to pay back some or all of the grant. The sum of $1,000,000 is appropriated for each of the next 2 fiscal years."

The other bill (House Bill No. 268-FN) related to the licensing of kindergartens:

> "This bill limits the use of the name kindergarten to those child caring agencies who comply with requirements for the use of that name as established by the State Board of Education. Each child attending a kindergarten will be assured a high quality educational program appropriate for his age. The sum of $74,670 is appropriated for the next biennum to meet the expenses of the Department of Education in carrying out its mandate under this bill."

Regrettably, both bills failed to be enacted into law.

A further attempt to encourage the establishment of public kindergartens was adopted by the State Board of Education on August 15, 1983. That effort resulted in an amendment to the Elementary School Minimum Standards, which established a new approval category, "Category IA." This new designation was defined as follows.

> "Category IA: A school which includes a kindergarten and meets all 40 of the required provisions of the minimum standards adopted by the New Hampshire State Department including the basics (reading, writing and arithmetic). This is recognized as the highest approval status."

The new Minimum Standards for Elementary Schools given final approval as rules on April 8, 1987 still reserve the highest approval category for schools with kindergarten. The category is defined as follows.

> Approved With Distinction
>
> A public elementary school which provides a kindergarten and which meets all 63 of the standards established herein shall be designated as "approved with distinction" for a period of five (5) years.

The highest approval designation which can be attained by a school without a kindergrten is "Approved."

The two proposed bills and the adopted policy change show that different groups share a common interest in public kindergarten. In addition, in the Spring of 1987, three more New Hampshire school districts voted to provide kindergarten programs. These actions taken together demonstrate that New Hampshire citizens are working to provide public educational opportunities for five-year-olds.

PUBLIC KINDERGARTEN IN NEW HAMPSHIRE AND
THE UNITED STATES UPDATED AS OF JULY 1987

All states except New Hampshire now provide public kindergarten for 90% or more of the state's children or have a deadline to do so within the 1980's. There are only two states with deadlines not yet reached; Vermont with a date of July 1, 1988 and Oregon aiming for 1989.

In 1983, seven states had not achieved the 90% mark, since that time, Alabama has solved its transportation problem by establishing kindergarten as an all-day program, and that state began offering public kindergarten to 100% of its five-year-olds as of the 1984-85 school year. Nevada offered public kindergarten to 99+% of its five-year-olds as of the 1984-85 school year. Over 90% of the school districts in Montana now offer public kindergarten. Like New Hampshire, in Montana public kindergarten is at local option. Beginning with the school year 1986-87, Mississippi offered public kindergarten to 100% of that state's children.

NEW HAMPSHIRE
SCHOOL DISTRICTS WHICH OPERATE PUBLIC KINDERGARTEN
1986-87 School Year

Allenstown
Alton
Ashland
Bartlett
Bath
Berlin
Bethlehem
Bow
Campton
Claremont
Concord
Conway
Cornish
Fall Mountain Regional
Franklin
Freedom
Gilford
Gilmanton
Gorham
Goshen-Lempster Cooperative
Governor Wentworth Regional
Grantham
Greenland
Hampton
Hanover
Haverhill Cooperative
Henniker
Hillsboro-Deering Cooperative
Hinsdale
Holderness
Hollis
Hooksett
Hopkinton
Inter-Lakes Cooperative
Jackson
Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative
Keene
Laconia
Lafayette Regional
Lebanon
Lincoln-Woodstock Cooperative
Lisbon Regional
Littleton
Lyme
Madison
Manchester
Marlborough
Mascoma Valley Regional
Monroe
Moultonborough
Newcastle
Newington
Newport
North Hampton
Northumberland
Northwood
Orford
Oyster River Cooperative
Piermont
Plainfield
Plymouth
Portsmouth
Rye
Seabrook
Stratford
Thornton
Wakefield
Waterville Valley
White Mountains Regional
Winchester
Winnisquam Regional

This list represents 46% of the school districts in the state which operate elementary schools; these districts had a total of 5,812 students enrolled in kindergarten in the 1986-87 school year. This is less than 40% of the five-year-old population in New Hampshire.

July 1987

NH TOWNS PROVIDING
PUBLIC KINDERGARTENS
1986-87 school year
(shaded)

(NH towns with no schools indicated by slash marks. Towns implementing public kindergarten in September 1987—dotted.)

CHAPTER 6
THE OPERATION OF A KINDERGARTEN

The experienced observer of kindergarten programs would probably agree that while all programs in operation have distinct personalities, there are some characteristics that are common to the operation of all quality kindergarten programs. This chapter begins with a discussion of those elements which are most important to the successful operation of a kindergarten program--selection of the teacher, the curriculum, and the environment.* The chapter concludes with an outline of operational elements that should be addressed/provided by all programs--ideally before the school year begins.

The Kindergarten Teacher. The teacher is the decisive element in determining the quality of the kindergarten program. The teacher is the catalyst between children and the world of ideas. Although school boards, administrators, parent groups, and even public pressure may contribute to the formulation of educational policies and goals, it is left to the teacher to interpret these objectives in light of his or her own knowledge, beliefs, and experience.

Of the many admirable qualities ascribed to the kindergarten teacher, the most important asset is a basic fund of knowledge: about young children, about the ways in which young children learn, and about the kind of school setting, materials, and equipment that contribute to young children's educational growth and development.

The kindergarten teacher is prepared to accept all children as they are and to allow them opportunities to engage in child-like behavior and activity. It falls to the kindergarten teacher to demonstrate that the kindergarten is a place where young children concentrate on developing their bodies, learn through their senses, sort ideas, and develop positive self-images.

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*The following excerpts are largely based on Kindergarten in New Hampshire, developed by the State Kindergarten Curriculum Guide Committee and published by the NH Department of Education in March, 1968. This publication is still supported by current thought and research in the field of early childhood education.

The Kindergarten Curriculum. No simple outline of curriculum can describe the program for the five-year-old. As the first school experience, kindergarten is neither limited to social participation nor is it a rigidly structured preparation for first-grade. The focus of the kindergarten is the child, and the curriculum is as broad as life itself.

Within the kindergarten setting, activities must be planned to provide children of widely varying talents, backgrounds, and physical development with the experiences that will assure optimum growth throughout the year. Children participate in the learning process intellectually, physically, neurologically, emotionally, and socially.

Outdoor play, active group play, and movement will help to build gross motor control and develop posture, laterality (awareness of left and right within one's own body) and directionality (awareness of left, right, up, down in the world around us).

A multisensory approach to learning helps children use all possible resources in building an awareness of the world. Each child is a natural learner. Children do not wait to be taught within the confines of a formal lesson. Children's global approach to learning has extremely important implications in planning suitable programs. Children do not necessarily learn one thing at a time in a careful, ordered sequence.

Language, the most important tool for thinking, develops as vocabulary increases through the many, varied experiences provided in the kindergarten. The kindergarten program is planned to afford maximum opportunities for children to be in small group situations so that they can listen and speak to each other and to their teacher.

Although the formal teaching of reading and writing, with emphasis on graded materials and paper work, has no place in the kindergarten, reading and writing as forms of communication quite naturally become increasingly important as the year progresses.

Story time, when the teacher reads to the children, is one of the most satisfying portions of the day. Through this, an understanding of what a book is all about and an appreciation for the written word are developed. The kindergarten room is well supplied with books that children can explore at any time. The teacher encourages the children to notice words as they look at books. The teacher writes down things that the children have to say, making charts about important discoveries.

Planning mathematical experiences to bring out both number and spatial relationships for five-year-olds should be flexible. However, provisions must be made for situations that will demand the use of numbers and number thinking and create an awareness of the geometric world.

The kindergarten room should be supplied with many different kinds of materials that stimulate number-consciousness. Through block building, carpentry, classifying of shapes, organizing things, distributing materials, matching real objects or flannel board figures, bead-stringing according to pattern, measuring liquids and solids, the children develop number concepts.

Art, music, science, and social studies interwoven throughout the kindergarten program, are particularly rewarding and delightful areas of exploration for the young child. They appeal to several of the senses simultaneously and offer avenues of expression unique and satisfying to each child.

The Kindergarten Environment. The kindergarten program is actually evident in the room environment. This classroom should not resemble traditional classrooms for older students. The kindergarten room is well-supplied with equipment appropriate for five-year-olds. Kindergarteners need concrete objects that stimulate imagination, problem-solving, self-expression, coordination, verbal and social interaction, and concept development. They need the space which will permit them to learn from these materials.

The costs of equipping a kindergarten room need not be prohibitive; many of the materials can be constructed by enterprising teachers and parents or donated by members of the community. Areas of the environment to keep in mind when planning for active learning experiences include dramatic play, housekeeping, blocks and construction, fine motor and manipulative activities, (puzzles, bead stringing, matching games), art and wood construction, music and listening, story reading and language, sand and water play, mathematics, and science.

Outdoor equipment is also a basic consideration. Ideally, the kindergarten playground should be separate from the school's main play area. It should include climbing structures such as a jungle gym, climbing fence, or monkey bars, and should provide ample space for running. Five-year-olds are very busy developing large muscles and need equipment and space to ensure large muscle development.

Operational Element Checklist. A complete discussion of the operation of the kindergarten program is beyond the scope of this handbook. However, it is important to recognize the extent of specific planning required and the number of issues that affect daily program operation. The topics and materials outlined below can be used as a checklist for program preparation by kindergarten implementors or for general awareness by policymakers and planners. Most trained preschool educators can assist in determining how to include these critical elements in a program which will conform to the resources available in your community.

This list of topics/materials is organized into major categories for efficiency of use.

Environment

- space allocation (minimum 50 square-feet per child)
- room plan
- indoor furniture
  - children's furniture
  - storage
  - teacher's furniture
- outdoor plan
- outdoor equipment
- toilet facilities (close proximity to classroom)
- sink

Schedule

- length of day
- daily schedule
- grouping patterns

Staffing

- teacher-student ratio
- qualifications of personnel
- role of paraprofessionals
- role of volunteers
- staff supervision

Curriculum

- multisensory activities
- gross-motor activities
- fine-motor activities
- language development
- reading readiness
- role of formal reading instruction
- mathematics activities
- science activities
- art
- music
- cognitive development/thinking skills
- social group interaction
- play
- physical exercise/movement
- outdoor activities
- field trips/community resources (social studies)

Art

easels
poster paint and brushes
fingerpaint
clay (water-base)
scissors
paste
paper--large variety suited to various media
crayons
chalk
sewing materials
wood construction--workbench, tools, lumber

Science

magnets
magnifying glasses
prisms
thermometers
pulleys
aquarium
pet, insect cages
terrarium
planting pots

Language Arts

books
puppets
flannel board
tape recorder/listening station
pictures
films, filmstrips

Music

piano
phonograph and records
rhythm instruments

Mathematics

scales
counting frames
measuring utensils
graduated rods/cuisenaire rods
rulers
clock
geometric shapes
fraction blocks
cash register